An Coimisiún Toghcháin
The Electoral Commission

SEANAD
HIGHER EDUCATION CONSTITUENCY

ELECTORAL REGISTER OVERSIGHT REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2026

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1. Foreword

Last year, An Coimisiún prepared and published its first Post Electoral Event Review (PEER) for a Seanad general election,[1] which took place in January 2025. We were conscious at that time that the election marked an important juncture in the history of Irish democracy, as it was the final time the six university Seanad members were elected by the constituency comprising graduates of only two institutions - the National University of Ireland (NUI) and University of Dublin (Trinity College Dublin, TCD).

The law was amended following the decision in 2023 of the Supreme Court in Heneghan v. Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government [2023] IESC 18 that the Oireachtas was obliged to enact legislation to give effect to the results of a referendum in 1979 that required the reconstitution of the Seanad electorate to include graduates of other institutes of higher education. *The Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Act, 2024* expanded the franchise to certain designated institutes of higher education and it is with the electoral register for that extended electorate that this report is concerned.

Section 26 of that Act of 2024 empowers An Coimisiún Toghcháin to commission or conduct research in relation to the accuracy and completeness of the new register of electors, the activities undertaken by designated institutions to ensure that those who are eligible to vote are informed of this right, the procedures relating to the processing and management of information by the Central Registration Authority (CRA) and any other matters relating to this new Higher Education constituency.

An Coimisiún did elect to exercise this statutory research power and accordingly is obliged to publish a report in relation to this new register of electors based on that research. The report by reason of Section 26(3) is to provide an assessment of how the register is being maintained, along with any recommendations considered necessary to maintain or enhance the integrity of the register and of the registration process.

Specifically recommendations may be made to the chief registration officer in relation to the maintenance and use of the register. An Coimisiún may set standards in relation to the electoral register and may make recommendations to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage with regard to the procedures for registration and the legislation relating to these procedures.

The Chief Registration Officer (CRO) Dr Patrick O'Leary submitted a report An Coimisiún Toghcháin in 2025 in relation to the state of the new register, the details of which inform this report. An Coimisiún also engaged with the Registration Officers of each designated institution and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in the preparation of this report.

This report is important, and is the first to be produced by us on this new electoral register. It looks at how the first electoral register for the new constituency was established, the state of the electoral register in 2025 and 2026 and the plans to develop and improve the registration process further. The maintenance and accuracy of the register is a matter of importance and the establishment of a new register presents an opportunity to achieve a high degree of completeness and accuracy, albeit the task is not in any sense an easy one. An Coimisiún will continue to observe with interest how it evolves and meets the requirements of a modern and efficient register.

An Coimisiún has no role in the day-to-day management of the Higher Education constituency register and cannot make or direct changes to how it is maintained. This management and maintenance is the responsibility of the Central Registration Authority (CRA), while designated institutions are responsible for the verification of applicant qualifications. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage holds policy responsibility in this area. An Coimisiún has made a number of recommendations in this report for consideration by the key institutional stakeholders.

I would like to acknowledge the cooperation provided to An Coimisiún by Dr Patrick O'Leary, the CRA, the Registration Officers of each designated institution, and the Department in the preparation of this report.

The Honourable Ms. Justice Marie Baker

Chairperson

An Coimisiún Toghcháin

2. Executive Summary

Between 1937 and 2025, six Seanad university seats were elected by graduates of two universities: three from the University of Dublin (TCD) constituency and three from the National University of Ireland (NUI) constituency. The *Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Act 2024* provided for the establishment of a new Higher Education constituency for elections to Seanad Éireann. This new constituency comprises graduates of higher education institutions, as designated under the *Higher Education Authority Act 2022*, who have been awarded or obtained a degree, are Irish citizens and are aged 18 years or over.

Under Section 26 of the *Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Act 2024*, An Coimisiún Toghcháin may commission or conduct research in relation to:

a. the accuracy and completeness of the electoral register,

b. the activities undertaken by designated institutions to ensure that all persons entitled to be registered as electors in the electoral register are informed of their right to register and the process for so registering,

c. the procedures relating to the processing and management of information by the central registration authority,

d. any other matter that relates to the Higher Education constituency that An Coimisiún Toghcháin considers to be relevant to its functions.

An accurate electoral register is one in which there are no false, duplicate or incorrect entries, where all data held for an entry is correct. The completeness of an electoral register can be measured by the extent to which every person who is entitled to be on an electoral register is on that electoral register.

An Coimisiún is required to produce a report every two years based on any research conducted or commissioned. An Coimisiún may make recommendations to the Chief Registration Officer (CRO) in relation to the maintenance and use of the register, may set standards in relation to the electoral register and may make recommendations to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage with regard to the procedures for registration and the legislation relating to these procedures.

The CRO is required to report annually to An Coimisiún Toghcháin in relation to the electoral register and the performance of their functions. The CRO submitted such a report in 2025, the details of which inform this report. In the preparation of this report, An Coimisiún also engaged with the Registration Officers of the designated institutions, each of whom completed a detailed survey in relation to their registration functions. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage also provided detailed responses to our queries.

Based on these engagements, report and survey responses, An Coimisiún found the following:

All stakeholders involved in the Higher Education constituency - the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Chief Registration Officer (CRO), the Central Registration Authority (CRA) and the designated institutions - worked effectively to develop processes through which those eligible to register could do so and are working on ongoing improvements to these processes.

The Higher Education constituency is a new register and has a low number of registered electors currently. However, the register has a high degree of accuracy at the time of publication. Those who were previously registered for NUI or TCD Seanad elections were required to register afresh for the Higher Education constituency, while graduates of the other designated institutions have registered for the first time. Individual data is recorded for each new elector, such as address, date of birth, PPSN and Eircode which minimises the potential for electors to register more than once. Maintaining high levels of accuracy as the register expands and as elector details change will be vital, particularly as all voting is carried out through postal voting.

It is difficult to determine with certainty how many potential electors are eligible to vote in the Higher Education constituency. Numbers ranging from 800,000 to over 1 million electors have been referenced by various sources. However, there is no definitive figure for the number of degree level graduates that are Irish citizens aged 18 years and over, particularly as eligibility is not restricted to those who are ordinarily resident in the State. There are currently just 71,850 registered electors on the register, which is a fraction of the estimated eligible electorate. This highlights the work to be done to increase registration and the importance of clear communications with as wide a group of potential electors as possible, through multiple channels and forums. There is considerable scope to increase elector numbers in advance of the next Seanad election.

NUI and Trinity College Dublin wrote to all those who were registered to vote in NUI and TCD Seanad elections with regard to re-registering as electors for the new Higher Education constituency. Of the 112,832 NUI electors and 76,019 TCD electors contacted by the universities some 31,286 and 15,288 respectively re-registered for the Higher Education constituency. While we acknowledge that the NUI and TCD electorates included deceased electors, and electors that were eligible for both TCD and NUI Seanad elections, the re-registration numbers highlight the work to be done by all designated institutions to increase registration numbers, improve inclusion and ultimately broaden participation in Seanad elections.

All designated institutions make efforts to engage with potential electors through alumni networks and graduation processes. These have had varying levels of success to date. However, there is very little activity beyond these networks to target potential electors. There is significant scope for designated institutions to be more innovative in their approach and to make a concerted, coordinated effort to inform potential electors of eligibility criteria and the registration process.

Registration is not open to potential electors throughout the year. The online portal is closed to registrations from the registration deadline in February until after the register publication deadline of 1 June. This may act as a barrier to registration and be a missed opportunity to increase registrations by graduates throughout the academic year.

Seanad elections are the only electoral events in Ireland that do not utilise supplementary registers. This can create a situation where the deadline to register is many months before an election is even declared, which could hinder the ability of many citizens to exercise their voting rights.

The facility that currently exists under the *Electoral Reform Act 2022* for electors to register as anonymous electors does not extend to Seanad electors. This means that those who have concerns with regard to their name and address appearing on the published register (which is only provided for electoral and statutory purposes) may be reluctant to register.

The witness forms which must be completed by those who do not wish to, or cannot, provide a PPSN when registering require a signature by either a member of An Garda Síochána or a public notary. Eligible electors living outside of the State may be discouraged from registering by the cost and inconvenience of having to avail of the services of a notary. However, this cost and inconvenience must be balanced against the requirement to maintain the integrity of the register.

Some issues have been raised regarding the eligibility criteria for registration for Higher Education constituency elections, specifically relating to the inclusion of the term “degree” in the legislation, which does not encompass equivalent qualifications. This may lead to a sense of disenfranchisement and confusion among potential electors and limit what is already a narrow electorate in this constituency.

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Recommendations

On foot of its findings, An Coimisiún makes the following recommendations:

Legislative Change

1. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, together with the Chief Registration Officer (CRO) and designated institutions, should review the eligibility criteria for registration, currently limited to a degree. The requirement for a degree has the potential to disenfranchise electors with equivalent qualifications, as per the National Qualifications Framework.

2. Legislation should be amended to facilitate the establishment of a supplementary register for the Higher Education constituency ahead of the next Seanad general election. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage should engage with the Chief Registration Officer (CRO) with regard to potential resourcing implications for the management of the supplementary register.

3. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage should consider facilitating anonymous elector registration for the Higher Education constituency, as is facilitated for other electors under the *Electoral Reform Act 2022*, to protect those whose safety may be at risk through the inclusion of their name and address on the published register.

4. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage should consider broadening the range of documents that can be used to verify citizenship, in consultation with the Central Registration Authority (CRA). This may require changes to prescribed forms. All details relating to acceptable verification documentation should be clearly set out on the seanadvoter.ie website.

Completeness

1. The designated institutions and the Central Registration Authority (CRA) should be more innovative and expansive in their communication activities with the aim of engaging with as many eligible electors as possible. Efforts should be collaborative, planned and coordinated and should involve multiple forums to maximise engagement with both alumni and new graduates in advance of the next Seanad election.

2. Given the global nature of the eligible electorate, the Department of Foreign Affairs should be consulted by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to support the Central Registration Authority's (CRA) efforts to engage effectively on a regular basis with eligible electors who are living abroad.

3. All designated institutions should prominently include information on eligibility criteria, registration and a link to seanadvoter.ie on their websites.

4. A network of the designated institutions should be established and facilitated by the Central Registration Authority (CRA) to share information on communications and engagement activities that they are undertaking and to collaborate on these where appropriate. This may be of particular benefit to designated institutions which are new to the electoral process.

Process

1. Potential electors should be able to submit an application to register for the Higher Education constituency via the seanadvoter.ie application portal or use the paper form at any time of year. Clear information should be available on the seanadvoter.ie website regarding registration and processing timelines.

2. The Central Registration Authority (CRA) should improve its registration process to minimise the possibility of applicants submitting incorrect information and consider including drop down menus to prevent instances of incorrect course names and years being submitted.

Introduction

The Seanad Electoral (Universities Members) Act 1937 provided for the election of three members of Seanad Éireann by graduates of the National University of Ireland (NUI) and three by graduates of the University of Dublin (TCD).

To allow the Oireachtas to enact laws to provide for the extension of the university electorate to institutions of higher education other than NUI or TCD, in 1979, the Seventh Amendment to the Constitution was approved via referendum by 92.4% of the valid poll[2].

The expansion of the franchise beyond TCD and NUI was enacted in law by the *Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Act 2024* – almost 46 years after the Seventh Amendment was approved. The full implementation of the *Seanad University Act 2024* was referenced in the Programme for Government 2025[3].

The amended legislation followed an important judgment delivered by the Supreme Court in a case brought by a graduate of the University of Limerick, Tomás Heneghan, who sought an extension of voting rights at Seanad university elections to graduates of third-level institutions other than those of Trinity College Dublin and NUI.

The Supreme Court concluded that the new article of the Constitution that followed the referendum in 1979 required the Oireachtas to legislate so as to extend the franchise for the Seanad university panel. The Court considered that the Oireachtas had to ensure that graduates of universities other than NUI and TCD were included in that electorate. The Court decided that it was a matter for the Oireachtas to determine the manner by which this was to be done, and the proportion to be allocated to the relevant seats. The amendment resulting from the referendum was not self-executing.

The Court, mindful of the implications for the composition of the Oireachtas were it to make an immediate declaration of unconstitutionality, suspended its declaratory orders to prevent what it called "constitutional chaos", and to allow legislation to pass openly.

Key reforms introduced in *Seanad Electoral (University Members) Amendment Act 2024*

- **New Higher Education constituency:** The Act establishes a new six-seat Higher Education constituency for electing university members to Seanad Éireann replacing the two three-seat university constituencies - University of Dublin (TCD) and National University of Ireland (NUI).

- **Expanded franchise:** The franchise for electing the six university members of Seanad Éireann is expanded to include those who have been awarded a degree from an institution of higher education, as designated under Section 53 of the *Higher Education Act 2022*[4] or by Order by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science under Section 54 of the Act of 2022. Each elector has one vote. A full list of designated institutions and current, affiliated and historic institutions is provided at Appendix 1.

- **Establishment of a Central Registrations Authority (CRA):** NUI is designated as the CRA and appoints a Chief Registration Officer (CRO), currently Dr Patrick O'Leary, Registrar of NUI. The CRA is responsible for managing and maintaining an overall electoral register for the new

constituency. Each designated institution has a Registration Officer to assist the CRO in the processing of register applications.

- **Management of the electoral register:** The Act provides for the registration process for electors and the drafting and publication of the first electoral register.

The Act stipulates that the first electoral register for the new Higher Education constituency was to be published on 1 April 2025, with a deadline for registration of 23 January 2025. A register is required to be published by 1 June each year following a registration deadline of 26 February of the same year.

The CRO, CRA, designated institutions and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage worked to ensure that the technical facilities to enable applications for the new electoral register were put in place within the required timeframe. In addition, communication resources were developed to amplify messaging about the changes to university voting. This work was undertaken while preparations were simultaneously underway by NUI and TCD for the 2025 Seanad General Election.

The 2024 Act also sets out the functions of An Coimisiún Toghcháin with regard to the Higher Education constituency electoral register. An Coimisiún is required to produce a report every two years which provides an assessment of how the electoral register is being maintained, along with any recommendations considered by An Coimisiún Toghcháin to be necessary to maintain or enhance the integrity of the register and the registration process.

Role of An Coimisiún Toghcháin

Section 26(1) of the *Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Act 2024* gives An Coimisiún Toghcháin functions to conduct research in relation to the electoral register such as:

- the accuracy and completeness of the electoral register,
- the activities undertaken by designated institutions to ensure that all persons entitled to be registered as electors in the electoral register are informed of their right to register and the process for so registering,
- the procedures relating to the processing and management of information by the central registration authority,
- any other matter that relates to the Higher Education constituency that An Coimisiún Toghcháin considers to be relevant to its functions.

Under Section 26(4) of the Act, An Coimisiún Toghcháin may:

- make recommendations to the Chief Registration Officer (CRO) in relation to the maintenance and use of the register,
- set standards for the Central Registration Authority (CRA) in relation to the register of electors, and
- make recommendations to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage related to the procedures for claiming an entitlement to be registered

in the electoral register and the legislation governing such procedures.

The CRO must report annually to An Coimisiún in relation to the register and the performance of their functions under Part 2 of the Act and, upon request, provide information regarding databases established to enable him to carry out his electoral registration functions.

This report includes sections on the following:

- Scope, Background and Methodology
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Establishment of Higher Education Constituency Electoral Register
- The Higher Education Constituency Electorate – Current Position
- Accuracy of the Higher Education Constituency Register
- Completeness of the Higher Education Constituency Register

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3. Scope, Background and Methodology

Report Scope and Methodology

Article 18 of Bunreacht na hÉireann[5] stipulates that Seanad Éireann shall contain a total of 60 senators. The Constitution provides that senators are to be elected or appointed in one of three ways:

1. Elected by universities (6 Senators)

2. Elected on a vocational panel (43 Senators)

3. Nominated by An Taoiseach (11 Senators)

The focus of this report is the first of these categories. This is the first report of An Coimisiún Toghcháin on the new Seanad Higher Education constituency electoral register, which was legislated for in the *Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Act 2024*. Subsequent reports will be published every two years[6].

This report covers a period of significant transformation from the enactment of the 2024 Act through to the publication of the second Higher Education constituency electoral register in June 2026. It considers the work undertaken by key stakeholders – the Chief Registration Officer (CRO), Central Registration Authority (CRA), designated institutions and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (the Department) - in the establishment, management and promotion of the register. The report also assesses the accuracy and completeness of the register. An Coimisiún puts forward a number of recommendations to support the accuracy, completeness and management of the electoral register.

The information contained in this report has been provided by the CRA, designated institutions and the Department through survey responses, email queries and meetings. A copy of the surveys issued to the CRA and designated institutions are included at Appendix 2.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The 2024 Act sets out the arrangements and governance structures for the establishment and maintenance of the Higher Education constituency register. It provides for the establishment of a new Central Registration Authority (CRA) and a Chief Registration Officer (CRO) to lead the authority in managing and maintaining the new Higher Education constituency electoral register. The function of the CRA is to prepare and revise annually the electoral register in accordance with the registration rules. Each designated higher education institution appoints its own Registration Officer to assist the CRO in their role. Registration Officers support the work of the CRA by providing information to verify claims for inclusion in the electoral register.

Central Registration Authority (CRA) & Chief Registration Officer (CRO)

- Under the 2024 Act, the governing body of NUI is the CRA for the Higher Education constituency.
- The main purpose of the CRA is to create and maintain the electoral register for the Higher Education constituency. This constituency elects six senators to Seanad Éireann.
- The current CRO, appointed by the CRA, is Dr Patrick O'Leary, Registrar of NUI.
- It is the duty of the CRO to prepare the electoral register and to revise it annually in accordance with the Act.

SeanadVoter.ie

- The team in NUI that carries out the functions of the CRA operates under the name SeanadVoter.ie.
- The SeanadVoter.ie team developed and manage the system that allows for applications to be submitted and verified in order to produce an electoral register.
- The team was tasked with the establishment of sytems and processes to faciliate the first Higher Education constituency register. SeanadVoter.ie continues to develop and improve the existing registration process while also having a strong focus on engagement with Registration Officers and formalising policies and procedures to support the functions of the CRA in the long term.

Designated Institutions

- Seanad voters must have received a degree from a designated institution, as defined under the *Higher Education Authority Act 2022*.
- Each designated institution must appoint a Registration Officer, who assists the CRO in carrying out their duties.
- Designated institutions verify the qualifications of register applicants and undertake activities to promote registration.

- Functions of the Registration Officer are generally subsumed into an existing role, for example, academic registrar, alumni management or academic affairs.
- Designated institutions are set out in the box below. A full list of designated institutions and current, affiliated and historic institutions is available at Appendix 1

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

- Responsible for electoral law, including the *Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Act 2024*.
- The Department undertook considerable preparatory work to assess the work invoved in establishing the new Higher Education constituency register and supported the CRA and designated institutions throughout that process.
- The Department provides ongoing financial and other supports.
- The Department is a key stakeholder in the continued development of the SeanadVoter.ie registration process.

Designated institutions

1. **Atlantic Technological University (ATU)**
2. **Dublin City University (DCU)**
3. **Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT)**
4. **Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT)**
5. **Munster Technological University (MTU)**
6. **National College of Art and Design (NCAD) (Pre-2000)**
7. **National University of Ireland (NUI)*, including**
   - University College Dublin (UCD)
   - University College Cork (UCC)
   - University of Galway
   - Maynooth University (MU)
   - Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)
   - National College of Art and Design (NCAD)
8. **Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) (Pre-1977)**
9. **South East Technological University (SETU)**
10. **Technological University Dublin (TUD)**
11. **Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (TUS)**
12. **Trinity College Dublin (TCD)**
13. **University of Limerick (UL)**

* NUI verifies qualifications for all institutions under the NUI umbrella. NCAD and RCSI verify qualifications awarded prior to becoming recognised NUI colleges

5. Establishment of the Higher Education Constituency Electoral Register

Key Timelines for development of the first Higher Education constituency register:

July 1979

- Approval of 7th Amendment to the Constitution by amending Art. 18.4.2 to broaden the constituency entitled to vote in elections for University panels for Seanad Éireann

July 2023

- Supreme Court found that the Oireachtas had an obligation to legislate for expansion of the franchise for university panels for Seanad Éireann

May 2024

- Launch of public consultation process on the General Scheme of the *Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Bill 2024*

July 2024

- Approval of NUI in principle as the Central Registration Authority (CRA) for the new electoral register for the Higher Education constituency

Oct 2024

- Signing into law of *Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Act 2024*
- Appointment of CRA and Chief Registration Officer (CRO)
- Start of development of voter registration processes by stakeholders

Dec 2024

- 17 Dec: Opening of applications for new Higher Education constituency Register
- Letters sent by NUI and TCD to all electors on these institution's registers regarding the Higher Education constituency
- 30 Dec: Ballot papers issued for Seanad general election (TCD and NUI electors only)
- SeanadVoter.ie team fully established

Jan 2025

- 23 Jan: Deadline for applications for Higher Education constituency register
- 29 Jan: Close of poll, Seanad general election (NUI and TCD electors only)

April 2025

- 1 Apr: Production of first Higher Education constituency register by the CRO - 62,775 electors

The 2024 Act required the first Higher Education constituency electoral register to be published and come into effect on 1 April 2025, following a deadline for applications of 23 January 2025.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage prepared for the implementation of the Supreme Court decision during 2024-2025, including:

- Developing and sharing communications assets to improve clarity and consistency in raising awareness about the new constituency to eligible graduates.
- Running a national media communications campaign through various print, social, digital and radio channels.
- Putting in place processes for designated institutions to claim all necessary and reasonable expenses incurred, including for new staff and appointment of Registration Officers, additional resources, technical system enhancements to gather data, file retrieval from storage and costs incurred in contacting alumni (as provided for under Section 20 of the 2024 Act). The total amount of funding claimed across 2024 and 2025 was €223,260.
- Facilitating sharing of information between designated institutions on activities being undertaken.
- Holding one-to-one meetings with institutions and newly appointed Registration Officers where needed.

The SeanadVoter.ie team of the CRA, established an online system that allowed for applications, verifications, and the production of the register. The team was also responsible for the development of processes for both online and postal registration and establishment of a verification portal for designated institution users to log in and verify applicant qualifications.

Communications activities to promote the register

The applications process for the first register was open from 17 December 2024 to 23 January 2025. The SeanadVoter.ie team collaborated with the Department, the internal NUI Communications team, and the Registration Officers in the designated institutions to develop and share information with the public. The Department produced and launched a national campaign, which ran for three weeks up to 23 January 2025. This included online, newspaper, and radio advertising. The Alumni Offices in the designated institutions issued emails to their alumni networks which institutions advised led to increases in applications.

To reach new electors and those already on the NUI and TCD registers, SeanadVoter.ie developed an online presence on Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. These platforms were used to share both original content and the materials produced by the Department.

The deadline for inclusion on the 2025 electoral register for the Higher Education constituency was 23 January 2025. The close of poll for the university Seanad elections in which NUI and TCD graduates were eligible to vote was 29 January 2025. The fact that the registration drive for the new Higher Education constituency register took place concurrently with the 2025 Seanad General Election presented a communication challenge as registering for the new constituency did not entitle a graduate to vote in the ongoing election.

Production of the register

The 2025 electoral register for the Seanad Éireann Higher Education constituency was produced on 1 April 2025. The SeanadVoter.

ie team processed applications from 18 December 2024 until the end of March 2025. The deadline for inclusion on the 2025 electoral register for the Higher Education constituency was 23 January 2025. The first electoral register for the Higher Education constituency was produced on 1 April 2025 and included 62,775 electors, 55,250 of whom were graduates of NUI or TCD. 9,851 applications were from graduates of institutions other than NUI and TCD. As applicants can list up to two qualifications on their application, they may be included in the figures for multiple institutions. However, electors have just one vote in Seanad elections. Details of the numbers on the register by designated institution, as well as information on the age profile of electors, are provided in Section 7, The Higher Education Constituency Electorate 2025 - 2026.

The register is produced as an electronic spreadsheet, which can be purchased for a prescribed fee of €100 by anyone who wishes to use the register for an electoral or other statutory purpose. The register includes the first names, surnames, current addresses, and ballot paper addresses of registered voters in the Higher Education constituency. It does not include PPS numbers, qualification details, or dates of birth. A notice of the production of the register was published on nui.ie.

Anyone using the register or allowing it to be used for reasons other than those provided for in the legislation is guilty of an offence and is liable for a fine and/or imprisonment.

There is no provision under the legislation for Higher Education constituency electors to register as an anonymous elector. This does not align with current policy with regard to electors in other electoral events, who are entitled to register as an anonymous elector under provisions in the *Electoral Reform Act 2022*[7].

Recommendation
The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage should consider facilitating anonymous elector registration for the Higher Education constituency, as is facilitated for other electors under the *Electoral Reform Act 2022*, to protect those whose safety may be at risk through the inclusion of their name and address on the published register.

Application streams – new applicants and previous electors

There were two application streams for the first Higher Education constituency register – new applicants and applicants who had previously been registered for the NUI and/or TCD registers.

New applicants

A new applicant could apply online or by using a hardcopy form. They were required to provide evidence of identity (their PPS Number or a signed Witness Form) and evidence of citizenship (a copy of their valid passport, certificate of naturalisation, birth certificate, or statutory declaration). The application was first checked by the SeanadVoter.ie team. If the application was found to be in order, SeanadVoter.ie sent a shortened version of the application to the relevant designated institution's portal for verification of the qualification presented. Where the qualification was successfully verified by the designated institution, the SeanadVoter.ie team added the applicant to the register.

Applicants previously on a university register

An applicant previously on the NUI and/or TCD university constituency register could apply through a simpler process. In December 2024, NUI and TCD sent

letters to all electors on their registers, which had been published on 1 June 2024. There were 112,832 electors on the NUI register, and 76,019 on the TCD register. These applicants were issued with a unique reference number to be used when registering for the new constituency. Electors who were on both the NUI and Trinity College registers were sent two letters, which led to some submitting multiple applications. This issue was managed by SeanadVoter.ie through cross-checking applicant data to ensure that no duplicate entries were included.

Applicants could present up to two unique reference numbers or up to two qualifications in their application. For graduates of all designated institutions, this increased the chance that their institution(s) were able to find and verify at least one of their degrees.

Electorate in potential Seanad bye-election

If any of the six senators elected from the NUI and TCD panels in the 2025 election were to vacate their seats in advance of the next Seanad General Election, this would give rise to a bye-election. In such a scenario, to fill the vacant seat, the electorate would be drawn from electors registered as NUI or TCD graduates on the new Higher Education constituency electoral register, as the NUI and TCD registers that were used for the 2025 Seanad General Election are no longer in effect.

When registering for the new Higher Education constituency, applicants were asked whether they would like to be included on the register for any bye-elections that may arise between then and the next Seanad general election. Where an applicant ticked this box, and is a graduate of a relevant university, they are entitled to vote should a bye-election take place. For example, if one of the three senators elected from the NUI panel were to vacate their seat before the next Seanad general election and a bye-election were called, the electorate would consist of NUI graduates on the Higher Education constituency register who opted into the bye-election register.

Development of the second Higher Education constituency register 2025-2026

The application process for the Higher Education constituency opens annually following the publication of the previous year's register with a closing date of 26 February on each year, and the new register is published by 1 June in that year. Applications for the second Higher Education constituency register opened on 23 May 2025 following the publication of the first register. Details of the timelines for the production of the 2026 registers, and future registers, as provided for in the *Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Act 2024* are set out below.

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Date	Process for the production of the 2026 register
29 January	Internal production of electors list by the CRA. This includes: • List A: Everyone on the current register. • List B: Applicants who have submitted a form of claim and who appear to the Chief Registration Officer (CRO) to be qualified to be registered but whose names are not in List A (i.e. people who have applied and been deemed eligible in the interim period between registers being published). • List C: List of persons registered in List A who appear no longer to be entitled to be registered as electors (e.g. deceased electors).
26 February	Deadline for applications.
12 March	The list of claims must be produced by 12 March. This is a list of applicants that submitted applications by 26 February that are not already on the register.
26 March	Deadline for submission of objections to entry on the register of individuals on the register or list of claims to the CRO for adjudication.
1 June	Production of electoral register.

Objection Process

Objections to the entry on the register of any person on either the electoral register or the list of claims can be made by persons who are on the electoral register for the Higher Education constituency or by any Registration Officer in a designated institution. The CRO can also object to claims mentioned in the list of claims.

A scenario in which an objection may be made includes where an applicant may have been added to the register following incorrect validation of their qualification.

Objections are made by completing and submitting the form *SVO2: Form of notice of objection in relation to an entry on the electors list or list of claims for the Higher Education constituency*. The closing date for receipt of objections is 26 March each year.

A copy of the objection must be sent by the objector to the CRO. A copy of the objection must also be sent by the objector to the person who is the subject of the objection by registered post.

The SeanadVoter.ie team investigate the grounds for the objection by examining the claim, contacting the claimant/elector, seeking additional evidence, and confirming any qualifications under objection with the relevant designated institution. The CRO rules upon the objection following consideration of the objection and SeanadVoter.ie team recommendation.

There were no objections in relation to the 2025 register. There were six objections to entries on the 2026 register, all of which were raised by the Registration Officer for NUI on foot of quality checks conducted by the SeanadVoter.ie team which were

notified to the relevant institutions. Applicants had presented diplomas, advanced diplomas, postgraduate diplomas, and national diplomas that were initially marked as verified; however, on review they were rejected. This is a an important check through which to ensure that register details are correct and that only eligible electors are registered.

Issues with application process

Electors can submit changes to their details via the seanadvoter.ie application portal or paper form. However, it is not possible to submit an application to register for the Higher Education constituency, nor to download a form to apply to register, between the application closing date of 26 February and the re-opening of registration following its publication on 1 June. In 2026 the date on which registration was scheduled to reopen was not specified on the seanadvoter.ie application portal in the period from 26 February 2026 until it reopened on 16th June 2026. SeanadVoter.ie has advised that the period of closure provides necessary time for the installation and testing of essential system updates that are not feasible during live operation.

It is vital that electoral processes are clear and that they are designed with the convenience of the elector in mind. At the minimum, there should be clear information in relation to registration timelines on the seanadvoter.ie website, including the date on which registrations will re-open. Ideally, potential electors should have the facility to submit an application to register at any time, as is the case for registration in other electoral events, and not just between June and February each year. The processes which are currently in place, while potentially practical from an administrative perspective may act as a barrier to voter registration at a time when optimising elector inclusion from all designated institutions should be a priority.

Recommendation
Potential electors should be able to submit an application to register for the Higher Education constituency via the seanadvoter.ie application portal and using the paper form at any time of the year. Clear information should be available on the seanadvoter.ie website regarding registration and processing timelines.

Provision of PPSN

In cases where an applicant cannot or does not wish to provide a PPS number as evidence of their identity, they are required to submit a Witness Form[8] with their application. This must be signed by a member of An Garda Síochána or any notary or notary public or a registered medical practitioner if the applicant is unable, due to illness or disability, to attend a Garda station, notary or notary public.

The implication of this is that applicants living outside of Ireland may have to pay a fee to a notary to have their Witness Form signed. While this may act as a disincentive to registration for some electors, this must be balanced against the requirement to maintain the integrity of the register through the verification of applications.

6. The Higher Education Constituency Electorate – Current Position

Numbers registered

In the 2025 Seanad General Election, in which just NUI and TCD graduates could vote, there were 188,851 registered electors in those constituencies. Some electors were entitled to vote in both NUI and TCD elections and were on both registers. Data was not available on the number of electors that were registered for both the NUI and TCD constituencies as these were separate registers, overseen by separate Registration Officers in NUI and TCD.

The first register for the new Higher Education constituency had a total of 62,775 registrations across all designated institutions. The register rose by 9,295 electors to 71,850[9] in 2026, an increase of 14.8%. Applicants can list up to two qualifications on their application to assist designated institutions in locating their record, and additional qualifications may be added if previous qualifications listed are ineligible. Therefore, in the data below, some applicants are included in the figures for multiple institutions. However, electors only have one vote in Seanad elections.

Designated Institution	Registered 2025 Seanad Election	Successful Applications 2025	Successful Applications 2026
Atlantic Technological University	N/A	555	520
Dublin City University	N/A	3,544	1,371
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design & Technology	N/A	330	176
Dundalk Institute of Technology	N/A	98	84
Munster Technological University	N/A	531	255
NCAD (Pre-2000)	N/A	43	25
National University of Ireland	112,832	38,538	4,980
RCSI (Pre-1977)	N/A	-	3
South East Technological University	N/A	433	294
Technological University Dublin	N/A	1,477	1,309
Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest	N/A	337	315
Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin	76,019	16,712	1,365
University of Limerick	N/A	2,953	949
Total successful applications	-	65,551	11,646
Total number registered	**188,851**	**62,775**	**71,850**

Source: Central Registration Authority. Applicants may hold degrees from both NUI/Trinity College and a non-NUI/Trinity College institution. Total successful applications include applicants that listed more than one institution on their application, Total number registered is the number on the Higher Education constituency register.

Age profile of electorate

The majority of electors are in older age ranges, with 68.9% of electors on the first Higher Education constituency register and 53.6% of new additions in 2026 aged 45 years or older. Electors are based in some 60 different jurisdictions; however, the vast majority (94.6%) are registered at addresses in Ireland.

Age Group	Successful Applications 2025	As a Percentage of Full Register	Successful Applications 2026	As a Percentage of 2026 additions	Total 2025+2026	As percentage of total electorate
18 to 24	1,820	2.90%	764	8.22%	2,584	3.59%
25 to 34	7,788	12.40%	1,718	18.48%	9,506	13.19%
35 to 44	9,945	15.80%	1,830	19.69%	11,775	16.34%
45 to 54	13,277	21.20%	2,005	21.58%	15,283	21.21%
55 to 64	13,363	21.30%	1,671	17.98%	15,034	20.86%
65 to 74	10,812	17.20%	938	10.09%	11,750	16.30%
75 to 84	4,932	7.90%	317	3.41%	5,249	7.28%
85 to 94	815	1.30%	50	0.54%	865	1.20%
95 to 104	22	0.04%	2	0.02%	24	0.03%
105 to 110	1	0.00%	0	0%	1	0.00%
Total	**62,775**	**100%***	**9,295**	**100%***	**72,071**	**100%**
Less removals	-	-	-	-	**71,850**	-

Source: Central Registration Authority SeanadVoter.ie Team

* total percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number

7. Accuracy of the Higher Education Constituency Register

For the purposes of this report an accurate electoral register is one in which there are no false, duplicate or incorrect entries, where all data held for an entry is correct and verified by the Central Registration Authority (CRA) and relevant designated institutions and where each elector is registered only once.

Importance of Accuracy

The accuracy of the Higher Education constituency register is fundamental to the Seanad electoral system. An accurate register should:

- Protect a person's democratic right by ensuring that people who are entitled to vote are correctly registered and those who are not entitled to vote are not included on the relevant register.
- Protect the integrity of an electoral event by ensuring that a person is only registered to vote once under the new rules of the Higher Education constituency even if they have received an eligible qualification from more than one of the designated institutions.
- Allow the turnout for elections to be accurately measured.
- Facilitate estimation of the number of potential eligible population not on the register.

The electoral register for the Higher Education constituency is a new register – the first was produced in 2025 and the second in 2026. All electors who had been on the NUI and TCD registers were asked to apply afresh for the register while graduates of other designated institutions are new electors.

Application and Verification Processes

The register application and data verification processes are set out below[10]. The forms used for registration, correcting an entry on the register or appealing a decision of the Chief Registration Officer (CRO) with regard to registration are prescribed in regulations made by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage under statutory instrument[11].

1. Applications can be made online via seanadvoter.ie or in paper format. The application form can be downloaded from the website. Applicants are required to provide the following details:
    - **Name:** Current name and former or other names, i.e. name at time of graduation to assist the verification process.
    - **Contact details:** Current email address.
    - **Proof of citizenship:** Applicants must provide a copy of a document for proof of citizenship such as the photo page of a valid Irish passport or certificate of naturalisation.
    - **PPS number or completed witness form.** The PPS number is not included on the electoral register.

- **Addresses:** Current address and the address to which ballot papers should be delivered. Both addresses are included on the electoral register.

- **Qualifications:** To assist with verifying the application, up to two awards can be submitted for verification. Applicants are asked to provide details of the institution that holds the record of the qualification, the institution attended, year of graduation, full title of degree and student number if available.

- Graduates of NUI, TCD, or both, who wish to be included to vote in bye-elections for these constituencies that may arise in advance of the next Seanad elections can tick a box for inclusion in such bye-elections.

2. An email is sent to the applicant to confirm submission of the application.

3. All application details are checked by the SeanadVoter.ie team.

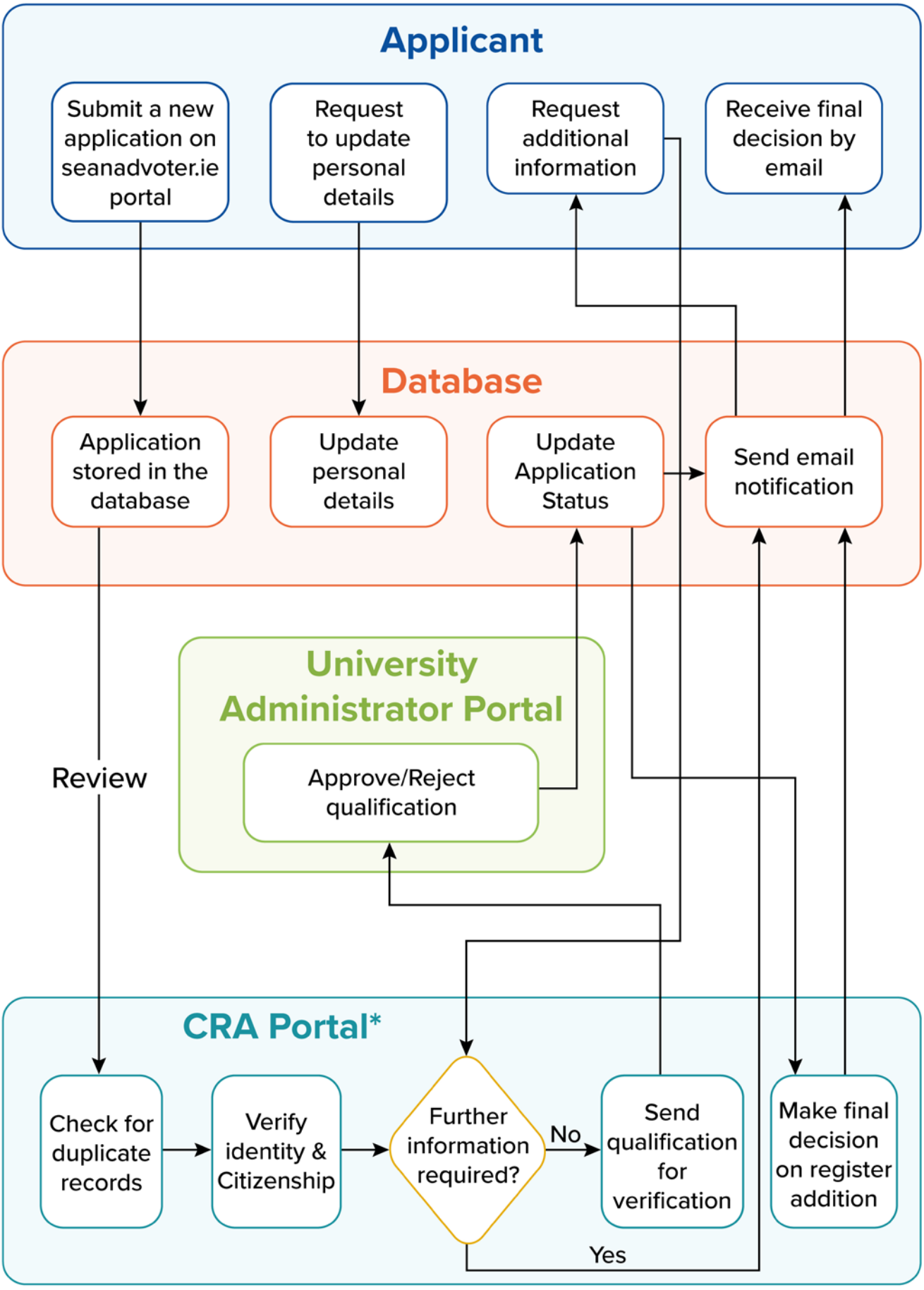
4. A shortened version of the application is sent to the relevant designated institution via their seanadvoter.ie application portal as a "pending" application to verify the qualification.

5. The relevant designated institution conducts a search of their records to verify the qualification of the applicant. Timelines for verification are generally short where the details submitted by the applicant match records held by the designated institution. In these cases, applications are marked as "verified" and returned to SeanadVoter.ie for further processing. However, further information or clarifications may be required from the applicant in some cases. In such cases, the designated institution returns the application to SeanadVoter.ie who liaise with the applicant. All communication with applicants with regard to their applications is conducted through the SeanadVoter.ie team.

- In some cases, designated institutions may need to search scanned records, paper files and data provided by linked and incorporated institutions.

- Where a record cannot be found, the application is returned to SeanadVoter.ie team marked as "not verified".

The registration and verification process is set out in the graphic below:



* managed by SeanadVoter.ie

Issues with verification processes

While it is vital that a robust verification process is in place to ensure that only eligible electors are added to the register, it is also critical that barriers to registration are minimised. When registering online or using the prescribed form, applicants are asked to provide a copy of a valid Irish passport or a copy of a Certificate of Naturalisation. As some Irish citizens do not hold a valid, in date Irish passport, this could present difficulties and be considered a barrier to registration.

It is noted that, in the Application Guide[12] on the portal, applicants are advised to contact SeanadVoter.ie if they cannot provide a valid Irish passport or certificate of naturalisation in their application. However, this information is likely to be overlooked by some applicants. SeanadVoter.ie have informed An Coimisiún that they may also accept statutory declarations and pre-2005 birth certificates[13] as proof of citizenship and that they are in favour of expanding the list of accepted citizenship evidence, e.g. to include Foreign Birth Registration[14] certificates.

Recommendation

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage should consider broadening the range of documents that can be used to verify citizenship, in consultation with the Central Registration Authority (CRA). This may require changes to prescribed forms. All details relating to acceptable verification documentation should be clearly set out on the seanadvoter.ie website.

Assessment of accuracy

The Higher Education constituency register is a new register and individual data such as date of birth, address and PPSN is held for each elector. Therefore, it is fair to say that the Higher Education constituency register has a high degree of accuracy at this time. Quality controls are regularly carried out by SeanadVoter.ie on electoral register data. In 2026, six electors were removed from the register as SeanadVoter.ie found that the qualification was not eligible under the legislation. Rigorous quality control processes will be required on an ongoing basis as the register expands. It will be vital to ensure that accuracy is maintained into the future and that incorrect information does not become "baked in" which is difficult to rectify at a later stage.

The fact that the electorate is spread across 60 countries, albeit that the vast majority are registered at addresses in Ireland (see Appendix 4), and that voting in Seanad university elections is done by postal voting adds to the importance of ensuring that the register is fully accurate. An inaccurate register may mean that some electors do not receive their ballot paper and are therefore denied their vote. It may also be vulnerable to fraud through impersonation, or at least the perception of fraud.

The Oireachtas Library and Research Service[15] noted that, in advance of the Seanad election of 2016 some 10,000 ballot papers were returned to TCD and 13,000 to NUI as voters had either not been home to sign for the ballot paper or they were sent to old addresses. The Seanad Post Electoral Event Review (PEER) noted that 19,810 NUI ballots and 14,388 TCD ballots were undelivered[16] for the same reasons. Although Seanad elections are the only electoral events in Ireland that utilise registered post, the associated procedures around signatures are not always enforced, leading to some ballot papers being delivered to the wrong address and not returned to the universities.[17]

It is important that the CRO, CRA and designated institutions not only focus on ensuring that new electors are added to the register, but also that those currently on the register are reminded to update their details as these change. Changes can be made by electors through the Claim Form for Correction of Entry in the electoral register[18] which is available online at seanadvoter.ie.

It will also be important to ensure that deceased electors are removed from the register in a timely manner. The integration of the registrations system with General Register Office[19] updates will assist in this regard - 212 deceased electors were removed from the register in 2026.

Developments to improve accuracy

An Coimisiún notes that the CRA plans to develop the online portal by end-2027 to improve user (both elector and designated institution) experience and overall functionality. As well as integration with the General Register Office, other improvements will also assist maintaining accuracy, including:

- Integration with the MyGovID platform will improve assurance of identity and reduce potential for duplicate records.
- Integration with the Department of Social Protection application programming interface (API) will assist verification of personal details, including PPSNs.
- Facilitating online checking of the register by electors so that they confirm whether or not they are registered and amend their details as needed (this facility is currently available to electors

registered for other electoral events via voter.ie and checktheregister.ie).

The designated institutions have a significant role in maintaining the accuracy of the register through their verification of qualifications from their institution. Under Section 11(3) of the 2024 Act, it is the responsibility of the Registration Officer of each designated institution to provide the Chief Registration Officer (CRO) "*with any information within his or her possession, power, or procurement*" that the CRO requires to verify that an applicant is entitled to be registered in the electoral register.

Information provided by applicants can sometimes itself be inaccurate with regard to details including title of qualification, year of graduation or name at time of graduation. It is understandable that these details may be lost by individuals with the passage of time. It is therefore important that institutions have robust systems and procedures in place to satisfactorily verify an applicant's claim. The CRA advises designated institutions that the decision to verify any applicant's qualification must be met with a high level of certainty. When making a decision on whether to verify or reject a qualification, designated institutions apply the standard of evidence required to that for a request for a duplicate parchment or student transcripts.

The manner in which some designated institutions hold historic data can give rise to challenges with regard to verification of qualifications. A number of institutions hold a mixture of digital and paper records which may include data from different institutions they have absorbed over the years. The paper records may be held on different campuses and not be easily accessible. The requirement to check paper records can also significantly slow down the qualification verification process.

For example, where an applicant cannot be located in designated institution records using the dates and degree title submitted, the institution may look at a 3-year window to verify the applicant's claim, which is reassuring in terms of ensuring that all applications are thoroughly reviewed. The use of technical solutions such as drop-down menus has the potential to reduce errors at the application stage.

Recommendation

The Central Registration Authority (CRA) should improve its registration process to minimise the possibility of applicants submitting incorrect information and consider including drop down menus to prevent instances of incorrect course names and years being submitted.

8. Completeness of the Higher Education Constituency Register

The completeness of an electoral register can be measured by the extent to which every person who is entitled to be on an electoral register is on that electoral register.

Importance of completeness

The completeness of an electoral register is an important measure of electoral engagement. It should be the ambition of the Chief Registration Officer (CRO) and each designated institution's Registration Officer that all of those who are entitled to vote in Higher Education constituency elections are registered to do so. However, An Coimisiún recognises the challenges in achieving this and defining with precision the number of potential electors.

Assessment of completeness

Under Section 7 of the 2024 Act a person is entitled to be registered as an elector in the electoral register if he or she:

a. has been awarded a degree by, or obtained a degree from, an institution that is a designated institution, or an institution that has been dissolved and the functions of which have been transferred to an institution that is a designated institution (under the Act "degree" is defined as a degree (other than an honorary degree) which is at least at bachelor degree level),

b. is a citizen of Ireland, and

c. has attained the age of eighteen years

CSO Census 2022 data indicates that some 1,288,101[20] Irish citizens have a third level qualification (see table on page 31). A percentage of that number will have graduated with qualifications that are not eligible or from institutions that are not designated under the 2024 Act, but there are also graduates living abroad who will be eligible to register.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) data provides useful information on Irish domiciled graduates, but not the citizenship of graduates. This data indicates that some 72,010 graduated with at least a degree qualification in 2024. A number of these may have other eligible qualifications from designated institutions (see Table on page 31). The HEA data also provides details of graduate numbers for each designated institution. While this does not accurately indicate numbers in scope for registration, the data does show the relative size of each designated institution's potential electorate within the new constituency. This emphasises the importance of activities to optimise registration by eligible graduates across all institutions.

Designated institutions	Total graduates-class of 2024
Atlantic Technological University	7,855
Dublin City University	5,315
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design & Technology	535
Dundalk Institute of Technology	1,635
Munster Technological University (MTU)	4,485
National College of Art and Design	390
South East Technological University	5,535
Technological University Dublin	6,180
Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest	4,855
Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin	6,915
University of Limerick	6,045
University College Cork	8,455
University College Dublin	12,365
University of Galway	6,575
Maynooth University	4,460
RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences	1,755
Total	**83,355**

Source: Key Facts & Figures | Statistics | Higher Education Authority

In the 2025 Seanad election, 112,832 NUI graduates and 76,019 TCD graduates were registered to vote.[21] The registration figures for the first Higher Education constituency for these institutions were 38,538 and 16,712 respectively. It is noted that the 2025 data includes electors that were registered in both the NUI and TCD constituencies, as was permitted at the time. The registers may also have included many deceased electors and electors with out-of-date addresses. The new register numbers are very close to the actual turnout figures for the 2025 Seanad General Election (36,151 NUI[22], 17,821 TCD[23]), suggesting that those who intend to be active in Seanad elections registered to vote. However, the low level of registration relative to potential numbers in scope is disappointing and highlights the need for a concerted drive by the Central Registration Authority (CRA) and designated institutions, supported by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, to communicate eligibility changes and registration processes. The low level may also indicate the need for a strong

communications focus on the importance of the Seanad and of voting in these elections.

Under Section 26 (b) of the 2024 Act, An Coimisiún sought details from designated institutions as to the activities they had undertaken to ensure that all persons entitled to be registered as electors in the electoral register are informed of their right to register and the registration process.

All designated institutions reported that they have undertaken activities to engage with new graduates and alumni with regard to registration for the Higher Education constituency and the registration process. Details of responses provided are available at Appendix 2. Unsurprisingly given the dispersed nature of the electorate, social media channels are the main means of communications, together with some information on institution websites and circulation of information via alumni networks. There is little activity beyond these networks to target potential electors.

Recommendation
The designated institutions and the Central Registration Authority (CRA) should be more innovative and expansive in their communication activities with the aim of engaging with as many eligible electors as possible. Efforts should be collaborative, planned and coordinated and should involve multiple forums to maximise engagement with both alumni and new graduates in advance of the next Seanad election.

Guidance relating to voter registration is also included in information for new graduates. One institution (UCD) provided resources to staff to share with their final year students. All of these activities were supported by a national media campaign during the 2025 and 2026 registration periods by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The Department also engaged with the Department of Foreign Affairs during the application window for the preparation of the first Higher Education constituency register and provided communications assets for circulation to the Embassy network.

Recommendation
Given the global nature of the eligible electorate, the Department of Foreign Affairs should be consulted by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to support Central Registration Authority's (CRA) efforts to engage effectively on a regular basis with eligible electors who are living abroad.

An Coimisiún noted that, while some designated institutions include details of eligibility criteria, registration information and links to the registration portal on their websites, particularly in alumni sections, not all do so. This information should be available on all designated institution websites.

Recommendation
All designated institutions should prominently include information on eligibility criteria, registration and a link to seanadvoter.ie on their websites.

It was noted by institutions that registration of less recent graduates is a challenge. It would be useful for the network of institutions to share information on activities that they are undertaking and to collaborate on these where feasible. This is particularly important in the case of institutions other than NUI and TCD whose graduates may not have the same familiarity with Seanad elections, leading to an under-representation of these graduates on the register.

Recommendation
A network of the designated institutions should be established and facilitated by the Central Registration Authority (CRA) to share information on communications and engagement activities that they are undertaking and to collaborate on these where appropriate. This may be of particular benefit to designated institutions who are new to the electoral process.

As highlighted in the Seanad Post Electoral Event Review Report (PEER), Seanad elections are the only electoral events in Ireland that do not utilise supplementary registers. The limited registration window and lack of a supplementary register facility may impact voter registration and turnout. Some students may graduate from their designated institution only after the voter registration deadline has passed for that year, which are missed opportunities to optimise registration and engagement.

Recommendation
Legislation should be amended to facilitate the establishment of a supplementary register for the Higher Education constituency ahead of the next Seanad general election. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage should engage with the Chief Registration Officer (CRO) with regard to potential resourcing implications for the management of the supplementary register.

Under Section 7 the 2024 Act[24], voter eligibility is restricted to those who have been awarded a degree by, or obtained a degree from a designated institution. The specification of a degree which is defined under the Act as "a degree (other than an honorary degree) which is at least at bachelor degree level" has given rise to some confusion and complaints on the part of alumni of designated institutions.

The Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI) in particular noted that prior to 1977, graduates were awarded licentiates to practice medicine or dentistry rather than degrees. It was noted that licentiates have been recognised as being equivalent to degree level under the Medical Practitioners Act 2007.[25] An Coimisiún was advised that the register eligibility criteria therefore caused some confusion amongst RCSI alumni who feel disenfranchised. An Coimisiún has also received correspondence relating to the classification of a Diploma in Ophthalmic Optics as level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications, the same level as an Honours Bachelor Degree,[26] but which is not accepted as an eligible qualification for registration purposes. The Higher Education constituency electorate is relatively narrow, based on its eligibility criteria. A review of qualification eligibility should be conducted by the Department together with the CRO and designated institutions with a view to potentially broadening the awards accepted.

Recommendation
The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, together with the Chief Registration Officer (CRO) and designated institutions, should review the eligibility criteria for registration, currently limited to a degree. The requirement for a degree has the potential to disenfranchise electors with equivalent qualifications, as per the National Qualifications Framework.

The potential for automated registration has also been raised by a number of institutions to optimise registration. However, this is a policy and legislative change that may need to be considered in the context of electoral reform more broadly.

Appendix 1

Full List of Designated Institutions and Current, Affiliated and Historic Institutions.

Current, Affiliated, and Historic Institutions	Designated Institution
All Hallows College (AHC)	Dublin City University (DCU)
Athlone Institute of Technology	Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
Athlone Regional Technical College	Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
Atlantic Technological University	Atlantic Technological University (ATU)
Austin Waldron Regional Technical College	South East Technological University
Burren College of Art	National University of Ireland
Carlow Regional Technical College	South East Technological University
Carysfort College	Dublin City University (DCU)
Church of Ireland College of Education	Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin
Church of Ireland Theological Institute	Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin
Cork Institute of Technology	Munster Technological University (MTU)
Cork Regional Technical College	Munster Technological University (MTU)
Cork School of Music	Munster Technological University (MTU)
Crawford College of Art and Design	Munster Technological University (MTU)

Current, Affiliated, and Historic Institutions	Designated Institution
Crawford Institute	Munster Technological University (MTU)
Donogh O'Malley Regional Technical College	Atlantic Technological University (ATU)
Dublin City University (DCU)	Dublin City University (DCU)
Dublin Institute of Technology	Technological University Dublin
Dublin Institute of Technology	Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin
Dún Laoghaire College of Art and Design & Technology	Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design & Technology (IADT)
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design & Technology (IADT)	Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design & Technology (IADT)
Dundalk Institute of Technology	Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT)
Dundalk Regional Technical College	Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT)
Froebel College of Education	Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin
Galway Regional Technical College	Atlantic Technological University (ATU)
Galway/Mayo Institute of Technology	Atlantic Technological University (ATU)
Garda College	University of Limerick
Institute of Banking	National University of Ireland
Institute of Public Administration	National University of Ireland
Institute of Technology Blanchardstown	Technological University Dublin

Current, Affiliated, and Historic Institutions	Designated Institution
Institute of Technology Sligo	Atlantic Technological University (ATU)
Institute of Technology Tallaght	Technological University Dublin
Institute of Technology, Carlow	South East Technological University
Institute of Technology, Tralee	Munster Technological University (MTU)
Letterkenny Institute of Technology	Atlantic Technological University (ATU)
Limerick College of Art, Commerce and Technology	Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
Limerick Institute of Technology	Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
Limerick Regional Technical College	Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
Limerick Technical College	Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
LIR National Academy of Dramatic Arts	Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin
Marino Institute of Education	Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin
Mary Immaculate College	National University of Ireland
Mary Immaculate College	University of Limerick
Mater Dei Institute (MDI)	Dublin City University (DCU)
Maynooth University	National University of Ireland
Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy	National University of Ireland

Current, Affiliated, and Historic Institutions	Designated Institution
Munster Technological University (MTU)	Munster Technological University (MTU)
National College of Art and Design	National University of Ireland
National College of Art and Design (NCAD) (Pre-2000)	National College of Art and Design (NCAD) (pre-2000)
National Council for Exercise and Fitness	University of Limerick
National Maritime College of Ireland	Munster Technological University (MTU)
NIHE Dublin	Dublin City University (DCU)
NIHE Limerick	National University of Ireland
NIHE Limerick	University of Limerick
NUI Galway	National University of Ireland
NUI Maynooth	National University of Ireland
Our Lady of Mercy College, Carysfort	National University of Ireland
RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences	National University of Ireland
Regional Technical College, Cork	Munster Technological University (MTU)
Regional Technical College, Tralee	Munster Technological University (MTU)
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) (pre-1977)	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) (pre-1977)
Royal Irish Academy of Music	Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin

Current, Affiliated, and Historic Institutions	Designated Institution
Shannon College of Hotel Management	National University of Ireland
Sligo Regional Technical College	Atlantic Technological University (ATU)
South East Technological University	South East Technological University
St Angela's College	Atlantic Technological University (ATU)
St Angela's College, Sligo	National University of Ireland
St Catherine's College of Education for Home Economics	Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin
St Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra	National University of Ireland
St Patricks College Drumcondra (SPC)	Dublin City University (DCU)
St Patricks College Maynooth	National University of Ireland
St. Patrick's College Thurles	University of Limerick
Technological University Dublin	Technological University Dublin
Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest	Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
Thomond College of Education	University of Limerick
Thomond College of Education, Limerick	National University of Ireland
Tipperary Institute	Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
Tipperary Rural Business Development Institute (TRBDI)	Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest

Current, Affiliated, and Historic Institutions	Designated Institution
Trinity College Dublin	Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin
University College Cork	National University of Ireland
University College Dublin	National University of Ireland
University College Galway	National University of Ireland
University of Galway	National University of Ireland
University of Limerick	University of Limerick
Waterford Institute of Technology	South East Technological University
Waterford Regional Technical College	South East Technological University

Source: SeanadVoter.ie

Appendix 2

Higher Education Constituency Oversight Report – Questionnaire – Designated Institutions

Purpose of questionnaire

Under Section 26 of the *Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Act 2024*, An Coimisiún Toghcháin may commission or conduct research in relation to:

- the accuracy and completeness of the electoral register for the Higher Education constituency.
- the activities undertaken by designated institutions to ensure that all those who are entitled to be registered are informed of this right to register and the registration process.
- the procedures relating to the processing and management of information by the central registration authority;
- and any other matter that relates to the Higher Education constituency that An Coimisiún Toghcháin considers to be relevant to its functions.

An Coimisiún is also required to publish a report every two years in relation to the electoral register for the Higher Education constituency, based on any research undertaken, and to make recommendations as desired.

Responses to this questionnaire will inform the oversight report of An Coimisiún Toghcháin. Please complete all parts of the questionnaire and thoroughly as possible. If you have any queries, please contact Elecreg@electoralcommission.ie

Section 1: Registration Officer Role and Responsibilities

1.1 What resources are available to you in your role as a Registration Officer? Please outline in the table below. Add additional rows to the table as needed.

Resource	Details
Staff (FTE)	
Budget specific to Registration Officer functions	
Other – please list	

1.2 What percentage of your time is allocated to your Registration Officer functions? What other roles/ responsibilities do you hold in addition to your role as Registration Officer?

Query	Response
Est. % of time spent on Registration Officer functions prior to registration deadline	
Est. % of time spent on Registration Officer functions outside of registration period	
Functions held in addition to Registration Officer functions	
Please provide other information as needed:	

1.3 What issues have you identified that delay the verification of an application? Please tick all that apply and add further issues as needed in text box below.

☐ Quality of data from the applicant

☐ Quality of records held by the designated institution

☐ Resourcing

☐ Other

Please provide further details below:

Section 2: Completeness Of Higher Education Constituency Electoral Register

A complete electoral register is one in which those who are entitled to be on the electoral register are registered to vote.

2.1 Based on records held, in the table below provide the most accurate available figure of the number of graduates of your institution that may be eligible to register as a Higher Education constituency elector, i.e. those with a bachelors, masters, or doctoral degree, who were Irish Citizens at the time of graduation

(a) for each year for which the requisite qualification levels were available

(b) for 2025

Timeframe	Numbers
No. of graduates holding at least one relevant qualification such as a bachelors, masters, or doctoral degree, who were Irish Citizens at the time of graduation from year in which eligible qualifications were awarded	
No. of graduates holding at least one relevant qualification such as a bachelors, masters, or doctoral degree, who were Irish Citizens at the time of graduation from year in which eligible qualifications were awarded in 2025	
Additional comments as required:	

2.2 Please provide details of the activities that have been undertaken to maximise completeness of the new Higher Education constituency register. Please add further rows to the table below as needed.

Activity (include details, e.g. Wrote to graduates X number of times, social media campaign etc.)	Timeframe	Target group and number in group, e.g. new graduates, alumni etc.	Cost

Please detail how the impact of these activities is assessed:

2.3 Please provide details of the challenges to undertaking activities to maximise the completeness of the register and possible steps to address these challenges. Please add further rows to the table below as needed.

Challenge	Details	Possible steps/supports to address the issue

2.4 Provide details of the number and nature of queries from alumni/graduates regarding the register since January 2025. An approximate number will suffice.

Nature of Query (examples set out below which may be added to)	Estimated Number
Query re. eligibility of qualification	
Query re. personal records	
Query re. application process	
Add additional rows as needed	

Section 3: Accuracy Of The Higher Education Constituency Register

An accurate electoral register is one in which there are no false, duplicate or incorrect entries, where all data held for an entry are correct and where each person is registered only once.

3.1 Please step out the process for verifying applicant details within your institution. Please include information in your response regarding the following:

(a) The extent to which student records that are used to verify applicant qualifications digitised.

(b) Whether student records used to verify applicant qualifications which are not digitised are easily accessible

Please use the table below to provide information on your processes, adding as many rows as needed. Please provide copy of guidance manual and/or process map where available.

Task	Detail	Timeline

- In the table below, please provide information on the timeframe for the verification of applications in number of days, weeks, etc? Please provide additional information as required.

Verification process	Avg. Timeline (days/weeks/months)
Routine application and verification	
Complex application and verification	
Additional comments:	

3.3 Approximately what percentage of applications require follow up with the CRA to request further information? What are the reasons for this follow up?

% of applications that require follow up with the CRA	
Reasons follow up may be required:	

3.4 In how many cases did the CRA request an update on an application from you?

(a) None ☐

(b) Less than 10 cases ☐

(c) 10-50 cases ☐

(d) More than 50 cases ☐

3.5 Please provide details in the table below of the challenges to verifying qualifications of applicants, e.g. inaccuracy of information provided by applicants, record management systems etc. What steps can be taken to address these challenges? Please include as many rows as needed.

Challenge	Details	Potential steps to address challenge

3.6 When available, are details of deceased electors provided to the CRA to ensure register accuracy? If not, how is this information managed in terms of ensuring register accuracy?

Please provide further details below:

Section 4: Reflections And Supports

4.1 Based on your experience as a Registration Officer, please outline your thoughts on the registration process and the ways in which it could be improved from both your own and the applicant's perspective. Please include your response in the table below and add as many rows as needed.

Issue	Potential improvement

4.2 What specific actions or steps can the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage take that would support your work with regard to the Higher Education constituency electoral register? Please set out your response in the table below and add as many rows as needed.

Action	Potential Impact

4.3 What specific actions or steps can An Coimisiún Toghcháin take to support your work with regard to the Higher Education constituency electoral register? Please set out your response in the table below and add as many rows as needed.

Action	Potential Impact

4.4 Additional comments: Please set out any additional comments that have not been reflected in the responses above.

Appendix 3

Registration Activities undertaken by designated institutions.

Designated institutions	Activity details
Atlantic Technological University	• Email newsletter to Alumni database signed by ATU President. • Social media posts including video shared by ATU President. • Press release issued by University communications team. • Regional press and radio advertising across Sligo, Mayo, Donegal and Galway for 3 weeks. • Regional Radio advertising across Sligo, Donegal and Galway for 3 weeks.
Dublin City University	• DCU Alumni Mailing.
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design & Technology	• Email to IADT graduates to inform them regarding the Seanad Register and their potential eligibility to apply to register. • Mail issued by Careers Officer. • Information on webpage. • Use of social media channels. • Email to 2025 graduates. • Emails to alumni.
Dundalk Institute of Technology	• Conferring Activities: - Promoted on conferring website. • One-pager included in the information sent to graduates in advance of the conferring ceremonies. • Representatives from SeanadVoter.ie attend the DkIT campus during the conferring ceremonies. • All staff email – “If you know someone who was a graduate of DkIT from 1970-present…”. • Website news article. • Social Media posts. • Inclusion in monthly Marketing and Communications newsletter to all staff and students. • Targeted and Local Communications-Careers and Employability Office: -Reposting on LinkedIn to the Showcase Page and Group and also forwarding the email to subscribers to registered graduates.

Designated institutions	Activity details
Munster Technological University (MTU)	• University Website in Alumni Section. • Social Media platforms: Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn. • Alumni Newsletter which is issued quarterly. • Class of 2025 Alumni. • Stand at conferring ceremony. • Flyers issued to graduates at graduation.
National College of Art and Design	• Supported social media campaign. • NCAD social media. • Information included in Alumni Communications.
South East Technological University	• Social media campaign. • Information on SETU website. • Information provided at new academic year registration.
Technological University Dublin	• Alumni emails targeting graduates. • Social media posts on platforms including Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram etc. • News posts on website.
Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest	• Alumni mail-out. • Alumni portal article. • LinkedIn promotions. • Promotion on website.
Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin	• Letter sent to all voters that were on the University of Dublin Seanad electoral register. Outlining The Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Act 2024 and next steps to register for the new Seanad Éireann Higher Education constituency to vote in any future elections after 31 May 2025.
University of Limerick	• Social media campaign. • Email campaign through Alumni office. • Students notified at graduation about eligibility.
University College Cork	• Alumni office and Students Union work to publicise the Higher Education constituency registration with graduates. • There was a stand at last year's Autumn conferring ceremony with representatives from the Electoral Commission to promote registration.

Designated institutions	Activity details
University College Dublin	• Email Campaign – Welcome Email to New Alumni. • Email Campaign – to relevant college/school newsletters for example, Science Newsletter at registration time. • Social media – Alumni Team promoted via social media in both Irish and English - Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram. • Featured in monthly LinkedIn Newsletter. • Reminders re registration to staff. • Downloadable media assets and 'template' of wording provided to staff to use in communications for colleagues to share directly with their own alumni networks and final-year students. • Promotional media designated institutions played in high visibility areas. • Information and registration links integrated into conferring material and into their high-traffic web pages, specifically under FAQs, Scroll Services and the General Links sections, targeting students at the point of graduation. • Conferring packs which are sent to all students include updated information (& have removed the older registration paper forms). • Leaflets and material designated institutions played in conferring hall and surrounding areas during conferring weeks.
University of Galway	• Included as a featured item in the February Alumni e-mail to all alumni. • Delivered targeted social media campaign across LinkedIn and Facebook during January and February, via the University of Galway and Alumni channels. • Issued as a direct e-mail from the Deputy President and Registrar to encourage staff to support and promote the initiative. • Included in an all-staff weekly e-mail in February. • Promotion via the Conferring webpage during Conferring Ceremonies. • Monthly E-Zines Comms. • Offered SeanadVoter.ie the opportunity to have a presence at 2025 Graduations and Postgraduate Open Days.

Designated institutions	Activity details
Maynooth University	• Conferring Office informs new Graduates of the Seanad Éireann Registration process. • Details are also on their website. • Student Records Office requests Alumni Office to issue a communication to all Graduates ahead of the opening of the application process annually.
RCSI	• Alumni newsletters. • Alumni events. • Graduation ceremony.

Source: Survey responses from designated institutions 2026

Appendix 4

Jurisdictions in Ballot and Current Addresses

No.	Jurisdictions
1	Argentina
2	Australia
3	Austria
4	Bahrain
5	Barbados
6	Belgium
7	Bermuda
8	Canada
9	Cayman Islands
10	Chile
11	China
12	Colombia
13	Costa Rica
14	Cyprus
15	Czech Republic
16	Denmark
17	Estonia
18	Finland
19	France
20	Germany
21	Great Britain
22	Greece
23	Greenland
24	Hong Kong
25	Hungary
26	Iceland
27	Ireland
28	Isle of Man
29	Israel
30	Italy

No.	Jurisdictions
31	Japan
32	Kenya
33	Liechtenstein
34	Luxembourg
35	Malaysia
36	Malta
37	Mauritius
38	Mexico
39	Monaco
40	Netherlands
41	New Zealand
42	Northern Ireland
43	Norway
44	Poland
45	Portugal
46	Singapore
47	Slovakia
48	South Africa
49	South Korea
50	Spain
51	Sri Lanka
52	Sweden
53	Switzerland
54	Taiwan
55	Thailand
56	United Arab Emirates
57	United Kingdom
58	United States of America
59	Vatican City
60	Vietnam

Endnotes

1 Post Electoral Event Review, Post Electoral Event Review Seanad Éireann General Election | January 2025

2 https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/referendum-results-1937-2024.pdf

3 Programme-for-government-securing-irelands-future.pdf

4 Section 53 of the Higher Education Act 2022

5 Irish Statute Book Constitution of Ireland

6 Under the Electoral Reform Act, 2022, An Coimisiún also has an oversight function in respect of the electoral registers managed and maintained by local authorities (referred to as registration authorities in the Act). Oversight Report on the Electoral Registers_online_English_tagged

7 Electoral Reform Act 2022, Section 93

8 S.I. No. 104/2025 - Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Act 2024 (Prescribed Matters) Regulations 2025

9 220 electors were removed from the register (212 deceased, 6 objections, 2 duplicates)

10 Application Guide is available on SeanadVoter.ie Application_Guide_100226_EN.pdf

11 S.I. No. 104/2025 - Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Act 2024 (Prescribed Matters) Regulations 2025

12 SeanadVoter.ie

13 Those born on the island of Ireland before 2005 are Irish citizens. For those born in the island of Ireland after 1 January 2005, Irish citizenship depends on the parents' citizenship at the time of the birth or the residency history of one of the parents before the birth

14 Citizenship by descent Citizenship | Department Of Foreign Affairs and Trade | Ireland.ie | Ireland.ie

15 LRSGSPaperSeanadUniversityMembers_160924_122203.pdf

16 Post Electoral Event Review, Post Electoral Event Review Seanad Éireann General Election | January 2025 pg.24

17 Post Electoral Event Review, Post Electoral Event Review Seanad Éireann General Election | January 2025 pg.22

18 SeanadVoter.ie

19 The central repository for records relating to births, stillbirths, adoptions, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths in Ireland General Register Office

20 Level of Education Census of Population 2022 Profile 8 - The Irish Language and Education - Central Statistics Office

21 See pg. 22 for register data

22 Seanad_Eireann_Election_2025_Results_All_Counts.pdf

23 Final Seanad election - News & Events | Trinity College Dublin

24 Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Act 2024, Section 7

25 Medical Practitioners Act 2007

26 National Framework of Qualifications | Quality and Qualifications Ireland

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